

## Appendix E. Wilderness Review

A wilderness review is the process used by the Service to determine whether or not to recommend lands or waters in the National Wildlife Refuge System to Congress for designation as wilderness. The Service is required to conduct a wilderness review for each refuge as part of the CCP process. Lands or waters that meet the minimum criteria for wilderness are identified in a CCP and further evaluated to determine whether they merit recommendation for inclusion in the Wilderness System.

According to the Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 USC 1131-1136; 78 Stat. 890), “An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.”

Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge contains a total of 1,738.8 discontinuous acres owned in fee title, by the Service. In addition 2,617.9 acres are managed under cooperative agreements and 1,519.9 acres are under easements. The Refuge is adjacent to a residential subdivision and a major interstate highway. The largest contiguous portion of land in fee ownership is about 840 acres, which is smaller than the area required for designation as wilderness. Moreover, the Refuge contains much evidence of past and current human use, including roads, actively managed wetlands, and remnants of past and current ranching and farming activities. For these reasons, Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge does not meet the criteria for wilderness designation.

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